



RockvilleReports

DECEMBER 2020 • VOL. 66 #10



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COVID-19: A Season of Social Distancing and Helping Neighbors in Need

Montgomery County remains in the second of three re-opening phases, with reopening guidelines limiting office use and encouraging telework.

With these guidelines in mind, the city is not able to welcome visitors back to City Hall or many city facilities, and no definitive date for reopening can be established at this time.

Information about the city's response to the pandemic is available at www.rockvillemd.gov, on social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Nextdoor), and on Rockville 11 (channel 11 on county cable).

For general inquiries about city operations, call 240-314-5000.

Montgomery County Pulls Back on Reopening Guidelines

The county issued a health order Nov. 10 that reduced capacity limits for businesses, including restaurants and retail establishments, and limited gatherings to 25 people or less, as the number of new COVID-19 cases continued to increase in the county. County health officials also urged the community to consider their most vulnerable family members when making holiday plans and reminded residents that celebrating virtually or with members of their own households poses the lowest risk for spread.

Learn more at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19.

County to Issue Relief Grants for Food Services

Got a Montgomery County food spot you love?

Let them know that restaurants and others, like food trucks, caterers and wineries and breweries that directly provide food service, may be eligible for up to \$10,000 in a pandemic relief grant to cover expenses like rent, payroll and more.

On Nov. 17, the Montgomery County Council authorized Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation to administer and award grants of up to \$10,000 to eligible services. Applications will be accepted until Dec. 4.

Find out more at thinkmoco.com/covid-19-resources/restaurant-relief-grant.

Food Distribution

Need assistance with food? Visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19-food for a list of food resources around the county and other important information. Rockville seniors can call the senior center at 240-314-8800, from 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Free COVID-19 Testing

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services continues to provide free COVID-19 testing, no appointment needed, at sites across the county. Visit MoCoCOVIDTesting.org or call the Testing Helpline at 240-777-1755 for more information about testing in Montgomery County, or find a test near you at coronavirus.maryland.gov/pages/symptoms-testing#siteapp.

Help a Neighbor in Need by Donating Online

If you have the means and would like to partner with the City of Rockville to help neighbors in need, consider donating today. Visit bit.ly/donate-rockville to contribute.

Mayor Newton's COVID Updates

Mayor Bridget Donnell Newton delivers regular updates on Rockville's response to the COVID-19 pandemic on the Rockville 11 YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/cityofrockville. 🌟



Virtual MLK Day Celebration to Feature Week of Service

Rockville will honor Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and legacy in January when the city holds its 49th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration virtually and participates in a week of activities as part of Montgomery County's 26th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service.

The city has planned six service activities following social distancing guidelines: cleanups of a trail at Croydon Creek Nature Center, a Weed Warrior weed pull

at RedGate Park, a self-guided neighborhood cleanup, making blankets for sick children, creating masks or scarves for needy families and creating handmade and hand-delivered goody bags for everyday heroes. Space is limited for these activities. Find more information, including how to register, at www.rockvillemd.gov/volunteer.

King recognized the power of service, famously saying

continued on pg. 4...

Mayor and Council to Discuss Budget Priorities Dec. 14, Ask Public to Complete Survey

Survey, in English and Spanish, to Help Identify Priorities, COVID-19 Initiatives, Budget Options

The Mayor and Council will discuss their Fiscal Year 2022 budget priorities during a work session in December and want to hear from community members about their priorities.

Public participation in the budget process is a high priority for the Mayor and Council and city staff. A budget survey, in English and Spanish, at www.rockvillemd.gov/budget allows community members to identify their top budget priorities, initia-

tives for reducing the negative impacts of COVID-19 and options for maintaining a balanced budget. The public response to the survey will provide valuable input to the Mayor and Council for their FY22 budget discussions.

Rockville's adopted operating budget for the current fiscal year totals \$140.2 million.

For more information, visit www.rockvillemd.gov/budget or call the Finance Department at 240-314-8400. 🌟

The Mayor and Council's upcoming budget process:

- **Monday, Dec. 14:** Discussion of the Mayor and Council's budget priorities and their survey responses.
- **Monday, Jan. 11:** Public hearing.
- Additional public hearings and work sessions will be held in 2021. The Mayor and Council are scheduled to adopt the budget in May.

December's work follows a Nov. 9 budget work session that included a review of the budget calendar and survey and a budget preview from city staff. Find the Nov. 9 agenda at www.rockvillemd.gov/AgendaCenter for a staff report and video of the discussion.

Check Once, Check Twice

State, county and city actions to slow the spread of COVID-19 mean uncertainty for activities, programs and facility hours in the City of Rockville. Please check our online resources to see if any information contained in this edition of "Rockville Reports" has changed.

Christmas Day, Friday, Dec. 25 and New Year's Day, Friday, Jan. 1: City Hall and most city facilities will be closed. Recycling and trash is not collected on Fridays. Collections will occur as usual during these holiday weeks.

The Rockville Swim and Fitness Center will be open to residents and facility members only, with limited services and activities on Dec. 24 and 31, and will be closed on Dec. 25 and Jan. 1. Visit www.rockvillemd.gov/swimcenter for details.

Parking will be free at city-owned meters on Dec. 25 and Jan. 1.

For more information on recycling and trash collection, visit www.rockvillemd.gov/recycling-trash or call 240-314-8568.

Learn more at www.rockvillemd.gov or call 240-314-5000. 🌟



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MAYOR & COUNCIL
111 Maryland Ave.
Rockville, Maryland
20850-2364

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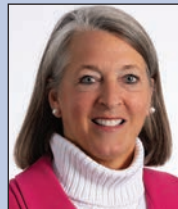
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Mayor & Council

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VIRTUAL MEETINGS ARE BEING HELD ONLINE. Meetings are closed to in-person attendance and are livestreamed at www.rockvillemd.gov/rockville11.

Meeting Schedule: Mondays, Dec. 7 and 14 at 6 p.m. Visit www.rockvillemd.gov/AgendaCenter.

The Dec. 7 meeting will be preceded by a drop-in session by telephone with Mayor Bridget Donnell Newton and Councilmember David Myles from 5:15-5:30 p.m. To participate, sign up by 2 p.m. Nov. 7 at www.rockvillemd.gov/FormCenter/City-Clerk-11/Sign-up-for-Dropin-Meetings-227.

If you wish to submit comments in writing for community forum or public hearings, please email mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov by 10 a.m. the day of the meeting.

Share comments live during community forum. Sign up by calling the City Clerk/Director of Council Operations at 240-314-8280 by 9 a.m. the day of the meeting.

All comments will be acknowledged by the Mayor and Council at the meeting and added to the agenda for public viewing on the website. To practice responsible social distancing, Mayor and Council meetings will be conducted by teleconference and broadcast on Rockville 11, channel 11 on county cable, livestreamed at www.rockvillemd.gov/rockville11, and available a day after each meeting at www.rockvillemd.gov/videoondemand.

City Seeks Input on Short-Term Residential Rentals at Second Public Hearing

The Mayor and Council will hold a second public hearing virtually, Monday, Jan. 11, to gather input on whether to develop recommendations to regulate short-term residential rentals in Rockville.

A short-term rental is when a dwelling unit, or part of a dwelling unit, is rented for a short period of time, usually fewer than 30 days. Most short-term residential rentals are coordinated through third-party companies such as Airbnb, Priceline and Expedia.

While short-term rentals take place in the city, no laws currently govern the practice.

At their Nov. 9 public hearing, the Mayor and Council requested a second hearing to collect the community's thoughts and opinions on short-term rentals prior to any recommendation for the development of regulations.

For more information, see the staff report in the Nov. 9 agenda at bit.ly/SRT11920.

See the column at left for how to take part in public hearings. ❖

Mayor and Council to State: Don't Build the I-270/I-495 Widening Project

An environmental study of the state project to widen interstates 270 and 495 between the American Legion Bridge and Frederick with toll lanes is "severely flawed," the Mayor and Council stated in a letter to the Maryland Department of Transportation.

"The [Draft Environmental Impact Statement] is severely flawed because it completely neglects the impact of the pandemic," the Nov. 4 letter stated. "The Travel Demand Model assumes traffic volumes will resume to pre-COVID levels, includes too many human health and environmental impacts, and does not include a public mass transit component. Therefore, the City of Rockville supports the only rational alternative in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act: The No-Build Alternative."

The letter goes on to detail

other city concerns with the project, including the toll rates; health and environmental impacts; potential to affect homes, businesses, infrastructure, and city property; the lack of a public mass transit option; the failure to sufficiently address social equity; and the state's handling of another public-private partnership, the stalled Purple Line project.

The state will consider testimony to determine a recommended alternative for the project and develop a final environmental impact statement. The state is expected to issue a record of its decision in the spring.

Visit www.rockvillereports.com/mayor-and-council-to-state-dont-build-the-i-270-i-495-widening-project to read the letter and learn more about the Mayor and Council's efforts regarding this project.

To learn more about the project, visit 495-270-p3.com. ❖



LEARN MORE ON ROCKVILLE 11
www.youtube.com/cityofrockville

Rockville Wants Drivers to Stop on Red Before Making Right Turns

The City of Rockville is taking steps to make sure drivers know the right way to make a right turn after stopping at a red light.

The city is posting "Right Turn Yield on Red After Stop" signs at 10 intersections within Rockville city limits where red-light cameras help enforce state law. The signs remind drivers that Maryland Law TA 21-202(h) requires a full stop before turning right at a red light.

When a vehicle travels through the intersection during a red light, makes an illegal left turn or fails to fully stop on red before turning right at an approved and labeled intersection, the cameras activate, taking photos and video to document the

violation.

The red-light camera system was installed to improve safety, not to collect revenue from traffic citations. When vehicles make a full stop, it creates safer crosswalks for pedestrians and safer intersections for vehicle traffic.

The Rockville City Police Department reviews all photographs and video evidence of a suspected violation before issuing a citation. The fine is \$75. Revenue from red-light camera citations goes to the city's general fund, where it is used to pay for the red-light camera program and other public safety expenses.

Find video of the red-light camera system in action and learn more about how it works at



bit.ly/RkvRedRightTurn.

For a list of the 10 red-light camera locations where signage is being installed, and to learn more about the red-light camera program, visit www.rockvillemd.gov/redlight. ❖

Final Days to Take Climate Action Plan Survey

Nearly 50 people attended an open house on Nov. 17 to share their vision for Rockville's Climate Action Plan. There's still time for you to share your thoughts on the plan, a Mayor and Council priority initia-

tive, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare the community to adapt to a changing climate.

Share your vision by taking a survey, through 5 p.m. Friday, Dec. 11, and/or by attending virtual of-

fice hours from 4-5 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 1 to learn more about climate change and discuss your ideas. Register for the office hours and find the survey at www.rockvillemd.gov/climate. ❖

IMPORTANT NUMBERS: Main: 240-314-5000

Police Non-emergency: 240-314-8900

24-Hour Utility Emergency Report Hotline: 240-314-8567



STAY INFORMED: The Mayor and Council meeting schedule and agendas can be found at www.rockvillemd.gov/mayorcouncil. Staff reports with background information are included with the agendas, which are posted several days before each meeting.

Get Involved with the City

- **Send an email** to mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov.
- **Testify at a hearing** or in writing to cityclerk@rockvillemd.gov or by mail to the City Clerk's Office, Rockville City Hall, 111 Maryland Ave., Rockville, MD 20850.
- **Volunteer** to be on a board or commission. Find ways to give of your time and talents at www.rockvillemd.gov/volunteer.

Boards and Commissions

Anyone interested in serving on a board or commission may write to: Mayor and Council, 111 Maryland Ave., Rockville, MD 20850, call 240-314-8280, or fill out and submit an expression of interest form at www.rockvillemd.gov/boardscommissions.

While some meetings are canceled, other boards and commissions meetings will take place virtually. See times and dates, and ways to participate on city's online calendar: www.rockvillemd.gov/calendar.aspx.

- **Dec. 9 and 23 Planning Commission** 7 p.m. (May be held by teleconference. Visit www.rockvillemd.gov/AgendaCenter for details closer to the meeting dates.)

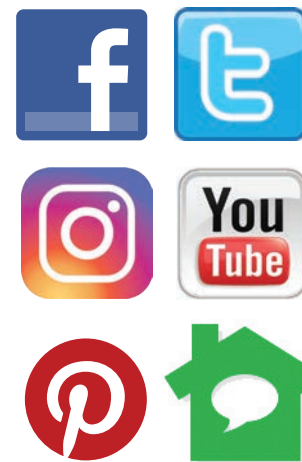
Vacancies

The Mayor and Council are seeking applicants for the following boards and commissions:

- Financial Advisory Board (2)
- Historic District Comm. (1 alt.)
- Landlord-Tenant Affairs Comm. (2 tenant alts.)
- Planning Comm. (1)
- Traffic and Transportation Comm. (1)

For more, visit www.rockvillemd.gov/boardscommissions or call 240-314-8280.

Connect with us on Social Media.



► SPEAK UP ◀

Report potential fraud, waste and abuse related to City of Rockville government services and employees.

Call 1-866-921-6714

Email rockvillemd@integritycounts.ca
Visit www.integritycounts.ca/org/rockvillemd
For more information, visit www.rockvillemd.gov/fraud-waste-abuse.

Rockville Metro Pedestrian Bridge Repairs Underway

The pedestrian bridge linking Rockville Town Center and the Rockville Metro Station over Rockville Pike is expected to reopen late next summer following repairs.

Metro closed the bridge June 17 due to safety concerns after glass panels in the bridge shattered.

The work, which is being managed by Metro, will include repairing two glass panels, replacing brackets and rubber pads that support the panels, and concrete work. A second contractor will make roof repairs. The work is expected to begin this winter, though Metro had yet to set a start date as of press time for this issue of "Rockville Reports." Structural repairs and roof replacement will occur simultaneously, with the project expected to be completed in July or August.

Construction is planned for weekdays, 7 a.m.-5 p.m. The contract allows for night and weekend work, though none is planned unless deemed necessary by Maryland Department

of Transportation permitting for work over Rockville Pike (MD 355). Rockville Department of Public Works staff met with Metro representatives on Oct. 22 to discuss the repairs and explained the need to comply with the county's noise ordinance.

The project, which was identified by the Mayor and Council as a priority, is expected to cost \$1.7 million, with the city covering \$425,000 of the cost.

Signs direct riders to a shuttle that runs daily during Metro service hours between the station's west entrance and a stop across Rockville Pike at East Montgomery Avenue and Monroe Street. The city worked with Montgomery County to modify signal timing so that pedestrians can more safely cross Rockville Pike at Park Road and Church Street using marked crosswalks and following pedestrian crossing signals.

Learn more at www.wmata.com/service/status/details/rockville-pedestrian-bridge-closure.cfm. ❄️

A New Way to Pay Utility Bills A new payment system debuts in January

Check your mailbox in January for:

- ✓ New account information.
- ✓ How to register.

Then:

- View and pay your utility bill online, anytime, with a credit/debit card or e-check.
- Receive bills and receipts via email with a paperless option.
- Get email and optional text message reminders.
- Choose to pay online or by mail, phone or text message.
- Create your own payment schedule with FlexPay:
 - Use Auto Pay to avoid late or missed payments, or
 - One-Time Pay to quickly view and pay without registering.

It's safe, simple and secure.

www.rockvillemd.gov/utilitybilling



Winter Special Edition Rockville Farmers Market



Saturday, Dec. 12, 2020

Saturday, Jan. 9, 2021

Saturday, Feb. 20, 2021

Winter Hours: 9 a.m.-noon
Location: Corner of Route 28 and Monroe Street.

GETTING THERE:
Metro: Red Line
Ride On: Bus 47 and 56
Free parking available.



www.Facebook.com/RockvilleFarmersMarket

www.rockvillemd.gov/farmers • 240-314-8620

County Offers Closer Look at Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit

Rockville will have a new option for traveling one of the city's busiest corridors with the arrival of a 7-mile, premium, branded, limited-stop bus rapid transit service along Veirs Mill Road.

The project, which is in the planning stages, will improve transit travel time and connect a significant number of minority and low-income riders to high-density housing and jobs along the highly congested MD 586 corridor.

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation presented plans for the project to the Mayor and Council on Nov. 2 after beginning engineering design this fall. The county will apply for federal funding for the project, which will be considered for connections with local bus service, such as Ride On.

The plans call for the purchase of new 60-foot articulated buses and new BRT stations with

level boarding. Proposed stations within the city along Veirs Mill Road are Twinbrook Parkway, Atlantic Avenue and Edmonston Drive, in addition to stations at the Rockville Metro Station and Montgomery College.

The project includes queue jumps and Transit Signal Priority technology to give buses priority and aid them through busy intersections. It calls for pedestrian and bicycle improvements, while retaining curbside dedicated lanes as the long-term BRT alternative along Veirs Mill Road.

Find the staff report and video of the presentation with the Nov. 2 agenda at www.rockvillemd.gov/AgendaCenter. To stay informed about upcoming public outreach on the project, follow the City of Rockville on Facebook and Twitter or visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/projects/VeirsMillBRT. ❄️

ROCKVILLE NEEDS VOLUNTEERS!

If you can help, we may have an opportunity for you!

- **Join a board or commission.** Find ways to give of your time and talents.
- **Rake leaves or shovel snow** for older Rockville residents.
- **Keep our city streams clean and weed-free.**
- **Earn Student Service Learning hours.**

Have ideas for volunteering?

Share them with Hjarman Cordero, hcordero@rockvillemd.gov.

These and many other opportunities are available at www.rockvillemd.gov/volunteer. (For additional opportunities from around the county, visit the www.montgomerycountymd.gov/volunteercenter.)



**HELP A
NEIGHBOR
IN NEED
DONATE
ONLINE**

Neighbors are facing unprecedented financial hardship due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Partner with the City of Rockville to help neighbors in need. Send a tax-deductible contribution with checks payable to "Rockville Holiday Drive Fund."

Visit bit.ly/HolidayDriveDonate to contribute.

City's Procurement Division Wins Award for Excellence

The City of Rockville's Procurement Division has been recognized for excellence, receiving the 2020 Excellence in Procurement Award from the National Procurement Institute, Inc.

The award is earned by public and nonprofit agencies that demonstrate a commitment to procurement excellence. NPI's annual program, in its 25th year, recognizes procurement organizations that embrace innovation, professionalism, productivity, leadership and e-procurement.

Rockville is one of only five agencies in Maryland, and 69 cities in the U.S. and Canada, to receive the recognition.

In 2020, the program had 188 successful applicants, including 40 counties, 69 cities, 15 higher education agencies, 22 school districts, 34 special districts, five state agencies and three others.

Matching Grant Program Seeks Projects to Improve Communities

Applications Accepted Starting Dec. 14

The city's matching grant program helps neighbors work together to accomplish common goals that support the health, vitality and inclusivity of the place they call home.

Community Empowerment Matching Grant applications will be accepted starting Monday, Dec. 14. The application deadline is Friday, Feb. 5.

Neighborhood, civic or homeowners associations, community groups, organized groups of neighbors and student groups are eligible to apply. Neighbors and organizations willing to match funding through cash, in-kind donations and volunteer hours are also eligible.

Applications are reviewed and grants awarded by the City Manager's Office. Grants typically range from \$500-\$1,000 and must benefit a clearly identified area within city limits.

Grant funds will become available after Friday, March 5.

To see the objectives for matching grants, and for an applications form and additional information, visit www.rockvillemd.gov/communityempowerment.

Human Rights Day, the Rockville Way

Human Rights Day is Thursday, Dec. 10. The day commemorates the United Nations' adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Dec. 10, 1948.

The city's Human Rights Commission is marking the day with information, at www.rockvillemd.gov/humanrights, to prompt ideas, conversation and action for upholding and respecting human rights. The COVID-19 pandemic and the response to the virus has raised many questions about how to balance public health needs with individual human rights protections.

In 1984, the U.N. Economic and Social Council adopted the Siracusa Principles, a set of guidelines for preserving human rights in the face of public emergencies. During such times, the Siracusa Principles can help protect human rights that risk being compromised, such as freedom of expression for journalists, health care workers, government officials, workers, civilians and members of the scientific community; freedom of travel and movement; and the right to education and information.

The principles also call for the response to public emergencies to be monitored to determine disproportionate impacts on different segments of society, such as the elderly, racial and ethnic minorities, the disabled, women and girls, migrants, and marginalized groups such as the homeless.

The City of Rockville is addressing problems related to the pandemic such as food insecurity and financial difficulty. For more information, see the article on page 1 or visit www.rockvillemd.gov/2316/COVID-19-Resources.

Learn more about Human Rights Day at www.un.org/en/observances/human-rights-day.



DON'T LET A CLOG BECOME AN UNWANTED HOLIDAY GUEST ... When the holiday feast is finished, don't pour fats, oils and grease, i.e., FOG, down the drain. FOG, including sauces, gravy and salad dressings, can trap solids, form hard deposits and clog pipes, causing basement backups, sewer overflows and costly damage to city infrastructure and private property. Before washing dishes, scrape food and grease into a trash can, use a paper towel to wipe away oil, or pour FOG into an empty can, let it cool to solidify and dispose of it.

